AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 47 [[1]], wherein the ratios of the superabsorbent polymer and the at least one other hydrophilic agent is ~~other hygroscopic agent range~~ from 80 to 20% by weight.

15. (Currently Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 47 [[1]], wherein the ratios of the superabsorbent polymer to the at least one other hydrophilic agent is ~~the other hygroscopic agent range~~ from 65 to 35% by weight.

16. (Currently Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 47 [[1]], wherein the ratios of the superabsorbent polymer to the at least one other hydrophilic agent is ~~the other hygroscopic agent range~~ around 50/50% by weight.

17. (Currently Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 47 [[1]], wherein the superabsorbent polymers have a grain size smaller than approximately 6 mm.

18. (Currently Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 47 [[1]], wherein the superabsorbent polymers have a particle size ranging from 0.5 to 3 mm.

19. (Currently Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 47 [[1]], wherein the superabsorbent polymers have a grain size around 0.3 to 1 mm.

25. (Currently Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 47 [[1]], wherein such compositions contain the following agents: reticulated acrylamide/acrylate

200 g/kg hide of superabsorbent, referring to the amount of reticulated acrylamide/acrylate,

200 g/kg hide of NaCl.

Claims 26-27. (Canceled)

28. (Currently Amended) A process for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 47 [[1]], wherein such contact is continued for a period of around 24 h.

29. (Currently Amended) Animal hides, characterized in that such hides have been treated for preservation with a composition as specified in claim 47 [[1]].

Claims 30-46. (Canceled)

47. (New) Compositions in particle form for preservative treatment of raw animal hides, comprising a mixture of:

at least one superabsorbent (co)polymer that absorbs the internal moisture of rawhide when deposited on the surface of a fresh rawhide during a dehydrating process, while allowing internal moisture necessary for good preservation of the hide to remain, and

at least one other hydrophilic agent, and

at least one bactericide and/or preservative agent,

wherein the superabsorbent polymers is at least one superabsorbent polymer selected from the group consisting of: crosslinked acrylamide, acrylamide (co)polymers, crosslinked (meth)acrylate (co)polymers, sulfomethylated (co)polymers, chloromethylated (co)polymers, dimethylaminoethyl (co)polymers, and (meth)acrylate (co)polymers.

48. (New) The compositions of claim 47, wherein the superabsorbent (co)polymer absorbs allows a residual moisture ranging from 20 to 70%, preferably 50%, by weight based on the weight of water-containing hide to remain in the hide.

49. (New) The compositions of claim 47, wherein the superabsorbent (co)polymer absorbs allows a residual moisture of about 50% by weight based on the weight of water-containing hide to remain in the hide.

50. (New) The compositions of claim 47, wherein the at least one other hydrophilic agent is one or more of NaCl, $CaCl_2$, $MgCl_2$ and/or KCl.